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ABSTRACT

This is the third of three technical reports that focus on the hiring and evaluation of educational personnel in Illinois. Practices used by colleges and universities to assess prospective educational personnel at the graduate level are presented in this report. A questionnaire was sent to persons responsible for all state-approved educational preparation programs. Survey instruments had been partially completed by the State Board of Education staff based on preexistent data files from the institutions, and respondents were asked to revise or provide information as necessary in order to supplement and update file information. Four types of graduate level programs were identified: guidance and counseling, general supervisory, general administrative, and superintendent. Data presented reflect information obtained and analyzed from 61 completed survey instruments (97 percent) representing graduate programs at 20 colleges and universities. The survey questions and results are presented in the same order as they were presented on the questionnaire: (1) admission to graduate college; (2) admission to a specific approved program; (3) graduation and recommendation for certification; and (4) perspective of quality of personnel in the program. Tables which show both the questions asked and the distribution of responses are provided in an appendix. (TE)

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A Study to Assess the Quality
of the Preparation and Performance of Educational Personnel

Study Report #3

INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT OF PROSPECTIVE EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL IN GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Illinois State Board of Education

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Department of Planning, Research, and Evaluation

Springfield, Illinois

Fall, 1982

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides a summary of the findings of a survey conducted in the spring of 1982. It is one of three technical reports which focus on the recruitment, selection, retention, and assessment practices employed in Illinois during the preparation, hiring, and evaluation of educational personnel. Statewide information will be used to identify issues regarding the quality of the preparation and performance of educational personnel. Practices used by colleges and universities to assess prospective educational personnel at the graduate level are presented in this report.

BACKGROUND

Ten years ago, when there was little disagreement over the fact that supply of teachers was greater than demand for teachers, in almost all subject areas and in most geographic regions, it was not uncommon to hear the view that this situation provided a golden opportunity to improve education. Schools of education could raise standards and be more selective about the teacher candidates admitted to professional preparation programs. Likewise, local district administrators could choose the "most qualified" candidate from a relatively large pool of candidates. What was particularly interesting about these proposals to improve education was that they were made at a time when, relatively speaking, there was little dissatisfaction with the overall quality of education.

Perceptions regarding the quality of education, as well as the supply/demand balance of educational personnel have changed. Illinois in particular has experienced a steady decrease in both the demand for teachers and the supply of newly prepared personnel. For the most part, however, supply has decreased faster than demand. The current supply/demand balance is viewed by many local district administrators to be insufficient for them to find "qualified" candidates. On the other hand, Deans of Education are concerned that decreased enrollment in some teacher education programs may not be sufficient to justify continuation of the programs. Opportunities to improve education by raising standards and selecting applicants, for many, are perceived to no longer exist. Rather, the problem is perceived by some to be one of recruiting prospective teachers, both at the college level and the local district level, in order to meet program needs.

Changing supply and demand is not the only reason, and perhaps not a primary reason, there is now much greater concern about the quality of education in our schools. Declining student aptitude and achievement scores, stories about children graduating who are not able to read, general concern in times of restricted budgets that one is not getting "his or her dollar's worth," have all contributed to increased attention, by both the public in general and among educational professionals, to the quality of education.

Given this gradual change in the perceptions regarding the quality of education, the Illinois State Board of Education has consistently and persistently taken action designed to improve the preparation of educational personnel. Since 1975, the State Board of Education has: (1) adopted a set of standards and criteria to be used in the review of teacher education institutions and their programs; (2) supported legislation which became effective July 1, 1981, requiring all applicants for certificates to

complete approved programs; (3) periodically reviewed the supply of professional educators, urged institutions to improve the quality of preparatory programs, and monitored the quality of these programs through a continuing review system; (4) adopted a policy to work closely with the Illinois Board of Higher Education in the approval of new preparation programs; and (5) adopted requirements for increased field experiences as a part of all professional preparation programs.

Legislators and representatives of professional education associations have also expressed general concern about the quality of education in Illinois. Following the examples of other states, proposals have been introduced and/or debated which would require minumum competency tests for graduation from high school. Other proposals would require proficiency exams for prospective teachers. Among the pool of proposals and counterproposals, questions regarding the recruitment and selection practices of colleges of education in Illinois continue to be raised. In addition, local district selection and retention practices have been identified as needing review.

There is general agreement among those concerned with the quality of education in Illinois that recruitment, selection, retention, and evaluation practices, at both the college or university level and the local district level, will affect the quality of educational personnel. There is less agreement on exactly how these factors affect quality. It is also generally assumed that Illinois institutions of higher education and local districts have developed diverse and varied practices in recruiting, selecting, and assessing educational personnel. Yet, there is little available information from a comprehensive, statewide perspective on what, in fact, constitutes common practices.

Given the current level of concern about the quality of education in Illinois as well as the scarcity of information about current recruitment, selection, and retention practices, the Illinois State Board of Education adopted a proposal in July of 1981 directing its staff to conduct a series of studies which would address some of these relevant issues. That proposal, in part, read as follows:

> The State Board of Education in one of its goal statements has committed itself to periodic review of "teacher education/certification standards compatible with educational needs." Such a review is timely in light of present concerns regarding the preparation and performance of certificated personnel. There are four major issues for which further examination and study should provide the Board information and data upon which to consider additional policy on teacher education, certification and assessment of educational professionals. They are:
>
> 1) What are Illinois institutions currently doing to assess the quality of teacher, school service personnel, and administrator graduates? What are the recruitment, selection, retention and evaluation criteria used by institutions?
>
> 2) What criteria are local school districts using in selecting staff? Do the selection criteria indicate needs for staff not addressed in preparation programs?

3) What are the constraints on institutions and school districts which may affect recruitment into the field of education, selection of staff, and improvement of staff skills?

4) What are the experiences of other states in using assessment instruments and what potential does assessment prior to certification have for Illinois?

Three separate surveys were conducted in the spring of 1982 in an effort to answer, in part, the questions raised in the proposal. First, a survey of local district practices was conducted. The purpose of this survey was to obtain information about the recruitment, selection, retention, and evaluation of prospective teachers in Illinois public schools. Second, survey questionnaires were sent to persons responsible for the preparation of professional educational personnel at colleges and universities, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The purpose of these surveys was to verify and obtain information about the recruitment, selection, retention, and evaluation of prospective teachers in Illinois public and nonpublic colleges and universities. Since it was recognized that recruitment and selection practices would differ for undergraduates and graduates, two separate questionnaires were developed, one for each level.

PROCEDURES

Information obtained from Illinois State Board of Education files suggests that selection, retention, and evaluation practices employed in Illinois colleges and universities varies from institution to institution and from program to program. Using available information, a draft questionnaire was developed which was then shared with persons involved in the process of preparing educational personnel for their review and comment. Once revised, the questionnaire was sent to persons responsible for all state approved educational preparation programs to be surveyed. Before mailing, survey instruments had been partially completed by State Board of Education staff using data previously obtained from the institutions and on file. Respondents were asked to revise or provide information as necessary in order to supplement and update file information.

Graduate level programs were identified for four types of programs: guidance and counseling, general supervisory, general administrative, and superintendent. Approximately 97 percent of the surveys were completed and returned. Based upon this high rate of return, findings reported are considered to be a relatively accurate representation of practices statewide. Data presented reflect information obtained and analyzed from 61 completed survey instruments representing programs at twenty colleges and universities.

FINDINGS

The survey instrument sent to colleges and universities with graduate level educational preparation programs was divided into four parts: (1) Admission to Graduate College; (2) Admission to a Specific Approved Program, (3) Graduation and Recommendation for Certification; and (4) General Perspective of Quality of Personnel in Program. Tables which show both the questions asked and the distribution of responses are provided in the Appendix of this report. The survey questions and results are presented in exactly the same order they were presented on the study questionnaire.

Admission to Graduate College

Part I of the questionnaire listed a number of factors commonly used to determine whether an applicant will be admitted as a graduate student. Respondents were asked to identify and rank the factors used to determine admission in order of relative importance. (See Table III-1.) Overall grade point average (GPA) was checked as a factor used by almost all respondents (98.4 percent) and was ranked first by 59.3 percent. Half of the respondents (49.2 percent) indicated that an undergraduate GPA of 2.5 (on a 4.0 scale) was required. Another 27.9 percent indicated that a GPA of 3.0 was required. If graduate GPA's were applied, the required GPA was generally 3.0 or above.

A committee review of a candidate's application was the next most used factor when deciding whether to admit persons. Over 85 percent of the respondents checked this practice and usually ranked it first, second, or third.

Letters of recommendation were checked as a factor utilized by 77 percent of the respondents, but recommendations were not necessarily of major importance. No respondent ranked letters of recommendation first, and 35 percent ranked this factor fifth.

Aptitude and achievement tests were utilized in just over two-thirds of the programs (68.9 percent). Of those who used test scores, 64.7 percent ranked them first or second. About half of those using test scores said specific tests were required. The other half indicated that candidates had a choice, generally between the Millers Analogy Test (MAT) or the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Over 47 percent indicated that the GRE was utilized, 31 percent checked the MAT.

Only four institutions specified required scores for the Millers Analogy Test (MAT.) Required scores for the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) were specified for only five institutions. The range of required scores on the MAT was from 35 to 50. The mean for the four institutions was 41.5. The range of scores on the GRE was from 800 to 1050. The mean GRE score was 916.7. The fact that so few institutions specified required scores suggests that the test scores are used in conjunction with or in combination with other criteria.

Interviews, usually by a graduate faculty committee, were utilized in the process of admission to the graduate college in just over half of the programs (52.5 percent). Grade point average in a major field of study was utilized in just under half of the programs (45.9 percent).

Two thirds of the respondents (65.6 percent) indicated that applicants who already possessed a Master's degree from a recognized teacher education institution but who intended to complete an approved program, still had to meet the requirements utilized for admission to the graduate college.

Admission to a Specific Approved Program

The second part of the survey included a list of eight items frequently identified as requirements to be met for admission to a specific graduate level approved program. Respondents were asked to check those that applied to their respective programs. (See Table III-2).

Overall grade point average (GPA) was clearly the most used item when deciding whether to admit a candidate to a specific approved program at the graduate level. Over 93 percent of the respondents checked this item. Other requirements, checked by over half the respondents, in decreasing order, were: Illinois certification as a classroom teacher (77.0 percent), experience as a public school teacher (70.5 percent), approvals or recommendations (65.6 percent), a committee review of a candidate (62.3 percent), and interviews (60.7 percent). Required overall GPA's were usually 2.5 or 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. When teaching experience was required, it was usually two years. Of those checking recommendations, most utilized employers as a source.

A relatively small percentage of respondents, 26.2 percent, indicated that experience as a supervisor or administrator was required. This is a reflection of the fact that administrative experience is a requirement for certification only at the superintendent's level. Grade point average in a major field of study was utilized for admission in 39.3 percent of the programs. Approximately 28 percent indicated that specific areas of study, other than those required for teacher certification, must be completed as an undergraduate or graduate student prior to admission to the approved program. Six institutions listed required areas of study. Of those, four simply stated that a number of hours of prerequisites were required. Two indicated that a teaching or administrative certificate was required, and one indicated that courses in research and statistics were required.

Graduation and Recommendation for Certification

Graduation from an institution and/or recommendation for certification is contingent upon a candidate's meeting specific criteria or requirements. The three most frequently imposed requirements were maintenance of a grade point average in an approved program of studies (96.7 percent), completion of clinical experiences (91.8 percent) and comprehensive examinations (62.3 percent). (See Table III-3.) A 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale is required in almost all of the programs (90.2 percent).

There was some variation in how required clinical experiences could be completed. Approximately 18.0 percent of the respondents indicated that clinical experiences were incorporated in required courses. Almost 64 percent indicated that clinical experiences incorporated in required courses and a practicum or internship must be completed. About 15 percent indicated that only a practicum or internship was necessary to complete required clinical experiences.

When required, clinical experiences were usually for one semester, but they ranged from one month to two years. Performance in clinical experiences is almost always assessed by university personnel (80.3 percent), but local school personnel participate in over two-thirds of the programs (68.9 percent). Just over 8 percent of the respondents indicated that it was possible for a candidate to be recommended for certification even if performance in clinical experiences was judged to be inadequate.

Fewer than half of the respondents indicated that different or additional requirements must be met for graduation or certification, although 47.5 percent require a thesis or substantial research project. Approximately 44 percent require that a candidate's overall academic and practical performance be reviewed by a faculty committee. Compilation of a portfolio of items regarding both academic and practical performance is required in 27.9 percent of the programs. Almost 5 percent of the respondents indicated that an applicant must be awarded a second graduate degree even if the applicant already earned the required level graduate degree prior to recommendation for certification.

General Perspective of Quality of Personnel in Program

The final part of the survey requested that respondents provide general information about the quality of personnel in their respective programs. (See Table III-4.) When asked if they thought the academic potential of education candidates had increased or decreased over the last ten years, most (72.1 percent) indicated that they believed academic potential had increased.

Comments explaining why the academic potential of education candidates had increased were provided by respondents from fourteen institutions. Half of the respondents provided reasons which focused upon the candidates. Included in this category were the following: 1) better prepared candidates, 2) more experienced candiates, 3) more serious students. Half provided reasons which focused upon changes occurring at the institutions. Included in this cateogry were the following: 1) closer scrutiny or better screening of candidates, 2) tighter requirements for certificates, including program review, 3) reputation of the program, and 4) higher admission standards.

Respondents were then asked to estimate the percentage of education candidates at their institutions that did not meet academic criteria in their initial applications at specified points in the program. For all programs, it was estimated that, on the average, 12 percent of the candidates did not meet academic criteria when applying for admission to specific graduate programs. When applying for graduation, it was estimated that an average of 3.0 percent of the candidates did not meet academic requirements. When applying for certification, it was estimated that an average of 3.3 percent did not meet academic criteria.

Finally, respondents were asked if they made any effort to recruit any people into the graduate education programs. Over 90 percent indicated that they do so. Respondents were asked to describe restraints, if any, to recruitment efforts. Comments were provided by nine respondents. Six indicated that there were no restraints or that the only restraints were the academic and experience admission requirements. Three indicated that lack of time and/or money were restraints. Three, however, indicated that they advertise their programs by sending out brochures, using posters, or by expanding course offerings - both the type of courses and the locations where they were taught.

Study respondents were provided an opportunity to list any steps taken in the last 10 years which were designed to ensure improved academic performance of graduate education candidates. Comments representing respondents from fourteen institutions were received. Almost all respondents indicated that more or higher standards were used. Included in this category were the following: 1) better screening of candidates, 2) increased practicum experience required, 3) continuing program review, and 4) more emphasis on written communication and research skills. Three institutions indicated that evaluations, supervision, and/or training techniques had been improved. Two indicated that better trained faculty were employed.

SUMMARY

A study to assess the quality of educational personnel can take many courses. One avenue to pursue is the examination of admission and assessment practices in departments, colleges and universities of education. The purpose of this survey was to obtain information about statewide practices regarding recruitment, selection, retention, and evaluation of propsective educational personnel in graduate level programs. Questionnaires were completed and returned by persons responsible for programs leading to certificates in the following areas: guidance and counseling, general supervisory, general administrative, and superintendent.

A factor of most importance utilized by nearly all institutions when determining whether a candidate should be admitted to the graduate college is overall grade point average. Grade point average in a major field of study was considered in less than half of the programs. Other factors and procedures widely utilized included a committee review of a candidate's application, letters of recommendation, aptitude tests, and interviews.

Overall grade point average, letters of recommendation and a committee review were also utilized when determining whether a candidate should be admitted to a specific graduate program. In addition, previous certification and experience as a classroom teacher were usually required.

Maintenance of a grade point average in an approved program of study and completion of specified clinical experiences were requirements to be met in almost all programs in order for candidates to graduate or be recommended for certification. The use of comprehensive examinations was also widespread when recommending persons for graduation and certification. A final review of a candidate's record by a committee is required at this step in almost half of the graduate level programs in Illinois. Research projects must be completed in slightly less than half of the programs.

Persons responsible for graduate level education programs generally believe that the academic potential of candidates has increased over the last 10 years, although both objective and subjective criteria are used when admitting students to graduate colleges. As candidates move through the different stages in the graduate level program and certification process, more emphasis appears to be placed on experience and the successful completion of research projects and examinations. Grade point average and committee review are, nevertheless, utilized throughout the process.

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APPENDIX A

TABLES

INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT OF PROSPECTIVE EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL: GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Table III-1

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES							
	Percentage Checking Response	Mean Rank	Distribution of Rankings (%) 1	2	3	4	5	6
I. Admission to Graduate College								
A. The items checked in Column A are factors used to determine whether an applicant will be admitted as a graduate student. Revise the items checked in Column A if inaccurate. Then rank the factors used to determine admission according to importance in Column B (1 = most important)								
1. Aptitude and Achievement Tests	68.9	2.8	23.5	41.2	5.9	11.8	0.0	17.6
All tests checked below are required	32.8							
Applicants may choose from those identified below:	29.5							
Miller Analogy Test Mean 41.5 High 50 Low 35	31.1							
Graduate Record Exam Mean 916.7 High 1050 Low 800	47.5							
Proficiency Examination	0.0							
Other	1.6							
2. Overall Grade Point Average (4.0 = A)	98.4	1.9	59.3	14.8	14.8	0.0	11.1	0.0
Undergraduate, if applied								
2.0	0.0							
2.5	49.2							
3.0	27.9							
3.5	6.6							
Graduate, if applied								
2.0	0.0							
2.5	4.9							
3.0	26.2							
3.5	8.2							
3. Grade Point Average in Major Field of Study (4.0=A)	45.9	3.2	0.0	28.6	21.4	50.0	0.0	0.0
Undergraduate, if applied								
2.0	0.0							
2.5	13.1							
3.0	8.2							
3.5	4.9							
Graduate, if applied								
2.0	0.0							
2.5	4.9							
3.0	11.5							
3.5	11.5							
4. Letters of Recommendation	77.0	3.6	0.0	25.0	25.0	15.0	35.0	0.0
Employees	45.9							
Undergraduage Faculty	32.8							
Graduate Faculty	37.7							
Other	24.6							
5. Committee Review of Application	85.2	2.3	33.3	19.0	42.9	0.0	0.0	4.8
6. Interviews conducted by:	52.5	4.0	0.0	21.4	7.1	42.9	7.1	21.4
Graduate School Advisory	11.5							
Graduate Faculty Committee	36.1							
Dean of Graduate School	4.9							
B. If an applicant who already possesses a Master's degree from a recognized teacher education institution, intends to complete an approved program, must he/she meet the admission requirements identified in A above?								
Yes	65.6							
No	6.6							

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Table III-2

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES	
II. Admission to a Specific Entitlement Program Please indicate whether the following are required for admission to a specific graduate level entitlement program.	Number and Percentage Responding Number	 %
1. Illinois Certification as a classroom teacher	47	77.0
2a. Experience as a public school teacher. If yes please indicate the experience required.	43	70.5
1 Year	3	4.9
2 Years	43	70.5
3 Years of more	0	0.0
b. Supervisory or Administrative Experience	16	26.2
1 Year	2	3.3
2 Years	14	23.0
3 Years or more	0	0.0
3. Committee Review of Candidate	38	62.3
4. Interviews, conducted by	37	60.7
Major Department Advisor	13	21.3
Major Department Faculty	20	32.8
Major Department Chairman	11	18.0
5. Overall Grade Point Average (4.0=A)	57	93.4
Undergraduate, if applied		
2.0	0	0.0
2.5	13	21.3
3.0	19	31.1
3.5	4	6.6
Graduate, if applied		
2.0	0	0.0
2.5	3	4.9
3.0	27	44.3
3.5	4	6.6
6. Major Field of Study Grade Point Average (4.0=A)	24	39.3
Undergraduate, if applied		
2.0	0	0.0
2.5	6	9.8
3.0	2	3.3
3.5	4	6.6
Graduate, if applied		
2.0	0	0.0
2.5	3	4.9
3.0	8	13.1
3.5	7	11.5
7. Approvals or Recommendations	40	65.6
Employers	27	44.3
Undergraduate Faculty	12	19.7
Applicant's Peers	7	11.5
Other	13	21.3
8. Please indicate whether any specific areas of study, other than those required for teacher certification, must be completed as an undergraduate or graduate student prior to admission to the program.	17	27.9

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Table III-3

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES	
III. Graduation and Recommendation for Certification		
Check the following criteria candidates must meet in order to graduate from the institution and/or be recommended for certification or endorsement.	Number and Percentage Responding Number	 %
A. Grade Point Average in an approved program of studies (4.0 = A)	59	96.7
2.0	0	0.0
2.5	4	6.6
3.0	55	90.2
3.5	0	0.0
B. 1. Completion of Clinical Experiences	56	91.8
Experiences incorporated in required courses	11	18.0
Experiences incorporated in required courses and a practicum or internship	39	63.9
A Practicum or intership	9	14.8
2. Length of practicum or internship, if required Range: 1 month to 2 years Median: 1 semester		
3. Performance in Clinical Experiences is Assessed by	49	80.9
Local School Personnel	42	68.9
University Personnel	49	80.3
Other	0	0.0
4. Is it possible for a candidate to be recommended for a certificate even if performance in clinical experience is judged inadequate? ("Yes" responses)	5	8.2
C. Completion of a thesis, or a substantial research project	29	47.5
D. Comprehensive examinations	38	62.3
E. Compilation of a portfolio of items regarding both academic and practical performance	17	27.9
F. Overall academic and practical performance of the candidate must be reviewed by a faculty committee prior to recommendation	27	44.3
G. Applicant must be awarded a second graduate degree even if the applicant already earned the required level graduate degree prior to recommendation for certification	3	4.9

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Table III-4

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES	
IV. GENERAL PERSPECTIVE OF QUALITY OF PERSONNEL IN PROGRAM	Number and Percentage Responding Number	 %
A. In your view, has the academic potential of education candidates for this program over the past 10 years:		
increased or	44	72.1
decreased	1	1.6
B. Estimate the percentage of education candidates at your institution that do not meet academic criteria in initial application at the following points in their pursuit of a program.		
% Admission to the graduate college Mean 11.9% High 50% Low 2%	46	75.4
% Admission to entitlement program Mean 9.1% High 55% Low 2%	48	78.7
% Application for graduation Mean 3.0% High 20% Low 1%	30	49.2
% Application for entitlement/endorsement Mean 3.3% High 45% Low 1%	32	52.5
C. Do you make any effort to recruit any people into graduate education programs?		
Yes	55	90.2
No	1	1.6

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